

PERFECTIONIST

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INT. BAR

WALTER sits watching the BARTENDER make his drink.

WALTER

Easy now. Careful. Not too many ice cubs. And why are you squeezing those when I explained the proper way is to slice finely and hang off the rim?

BARTENDER

Listen buddy, I'll let you do your job if you let me do mine.

WALTER

It's just you're making my drink completely incorrect. It would be different if I didn't know the proper way it was made but I do and I can't just sit here and watch you butcher it.

BARTENDER

Ok wise guy. You're such an expert. Make the damn drink yourself.

Bartender throws down his towel and leaves. Walter looks around the bar, hesitant before getting up and continuing to make the drink behind the bar himself.

WALTER

There. Now that was made to perfection.

Walter looks around but no one is there to appreciate it. He takes a sip. Walter looks around and begins to tidy up the bar and carefully arrange garnishes and glasses perfectly symmetrically. He looks around to make sure the coast is clear.

WALTER (CONT'D)

(to no one)

Why hello there! I'm Walter and how are you fine people this evening?

The bartender walks up and sits down on the barstool. Walter is embarrassed and pretends he wasn't talking to no one.

BARTENDER

Jamison neat with a water back.

Walter stares at him dumbfounded. He doesn't know that one and starts to look around panicked for the Jamison.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
You don't know what that is, do you?

WALTER  
(lying)  
I do too.  
(beat)  
But I know my cocktails. Let me recommend a Manhattan. Trust me it's my speciality.

BARTENDER  
Listen buddy if I disregarded every request my customers made I would be out of the job. Just make my damn drink and stop trying to control everything.

This hits Walter.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
Jamison's over there. Top right corner. Neat means nothing in my glass except whiskey. Water back means I want a glass of water to chase it with.

WALTER  
Ok great. Perfect.

He starts to fumble around. The Bartender LAUGHS.

BARTENDER  
It's funny being on the other side of the bar. Not used to it.  
(beat)  
So what's your story?

WALTER  
Aren't I supposed to ask YOU that? Now who's the controlling one.

BARTENDER  
Touche.  
(beat)  
Guess I'm so used to making sure others are ok feels a little weird when someone asks me about myself.

WALTER  
Deflecting...

BARTENDER  
What do you wanna know?

WALTER  
How long have you been a bartender?

BARTENDER  
10 years.

WALTER  
Wow. That's a long time.

BARTENDER  
I guess. How long have you been a control freak?

WALTER  
(smiles)  
Born with a gift.

They both LAUGH.

BARTENDER  
So what are you doing here on a Tuesday morning drinking alone?

WALTER  
People give me anxiety. I work for myself so I come and enjoy bars when there aren't others here. It's marvelous.

BARTENDER  
(laughing)  
Why do people give you anxiety?

WALTER  
(looking at him  
dumbfounded)  
Do I really need to explain THAT to YOU? I'm sure working a typical Friday night here you get your fill.

BARTENDER  
(laughs)  
You're pretty insightful.

WALTER  
Well without all of my time wasted on social anxiety I use it to have insights.

BARTENDER

(beat)

Do you have any friends?

WALTER

Define friend.

BARTENDER

People in your life who aren't family that you hang out with, enjoy each other's company, do leisurely activities together.

WALTER

Definitely not. I am my own best company.

BARTENDER

Do you actually believe that?

WALTER

Absolutely. Don't you?

BARTENDER

Guess not. Maybe that's why I work in a bar. To remind myself of my lowliness.

WALTER

(laughs)

Now that was funny. I don't mind you.

BARTENDER

(laughs)

Well that's a relief.

WALTER

What is your name?

BARTENDER

Mark.

WALTER

Nice to meet you Mark.

MARK

Likewise.

WALTER

You know that "friend" thing doesn't sound so excruciating after all.

MARK  
Don't get sappy now.

WALTER  
You're right. Stopping now.

MARK  
That was a close one.

WALTER  
You're telling me.

They both LAUGH and sip on their respective drinks.